

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

Third Meeting  
December 9-10, 1971

Summary of Proceedings

There were present:

Members of the Commission: Messrs. Aines, Becker, Burkhardt, Cuadra, Dunlap, Goland, Kemeny, Lerner, Mrs. Moore, Mr. Mumford, Miss Scott, and Mr. Velde. (Messrs. Baker and Zipf did not attend. Mr. John Lorenz, Deputy Librarian of Congress, substituted for Mr. Mumford from time to time.)

Staff: Mr. Stevens and Mrs. Reszetar, Commission staff; Miss Bowman, Mr. Burkhardt's secretary.

Guests: As listed in the full proceedings.

Opening the meeting on December 9, the Chairman introduced Mr. Charles H. Stevens, who had accepted appointment as Executive Director of the Commission.

Mr. Burton Lamkin, Associate Commissioner of Education and head of the Office of Education's Bureau of Libraries and Educational Technology, discussed his Bureau's programs and plans and issues that concern it and other branches of OE. Mr. Lamkin had distributed materials to the Commission in advance of the meeting, and he and colleagues who accompanied him answered questions asked by Commission members.

The following resources for OE library programs were listed:

- 1) Library Services and Construction Act. The programs funded by this Act are largely state operated and there is very little leverage for direction of spending.
- 2) Higher Education Act. Training and research programs, for which this Act provides, are somewhat flexible, though they have structured priorities and goals. There is not much flexibility in the college library resources program.
- 3) Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The ESEA program is not at present represented in the Bureau of Libraries and Educational Technology.

Mr. Lamkin said that support for disadvantaged persons (which is basically funded under the Library Services and Construction Act--plus some other discretionary funds) accounted for 20% of expenditures in 1970, 36% this year, and the projection for next year is upwards toward 50%.

Defining "discretionary" as distinguished from "non-discretionary" OE funds, Mr. Lamkin said that the former has come to mean funds that are not operated by the states--and thus includes some moneys that are specifically targeted.

Mr. Lamkin said that OE has a very small amount of money with which to try to do an enormous job, and that libraries have low visibility and low priority.

He listed the following issues as having been raised by the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare with respect to library programs:

- 1) The social utility of libraries. (In discussion of this point, Mr. Cuadra asked whether there should be equal resources for all citizens, regardless of where they happen to live and, if so, whether that is not inconsistent with the notion that more responsibility should be given to the states. Mr. Lamkin said his answer to the first question was yes and, though there are inconsistencies between that goal and current policy, he thinks it is possible to move slowly toward the objective.)

- 2) Measurability of impact of libraries on communities and clients.

- 3) The cost of library services.

- 4) Assessment of needs for library services.

- 5) The role of the federal government in support of libraries. (The federal share is now not much more than six or seven percent, Mr. Lamkin said, but that is higher than the Administration wants it to be.)

- 6) Unemployment and occupational opportunities. (Mr. Lamkin said that much more information is needed, but he believes a vigorous training program is still called for. He spoke of the present emphasis on training para-professionals, and members of the Commission pointed out various problems that this emphasis may create. Mr. Lamkin mentioned that the minorities lumped together account for 15% of the population, while only 1.3% of librarians are members of minority groups.)

Mr. Lamkin spoke of the need for his Bureau to pay more attention to networking and said it is now conducting a survey intended to lead to a better understanding of different types of consortia and what makes them succeed or fail.

A management training program for state librarians was mentioned, and Mr. Lamkin said he regards the state librarian as basically the person responsible for assuring that there is an equalization of learning resources in his state. Also, he looks to the state librarian to maintain a strong communication process with the federal government, and to make the needs of the state known.

"Right now," Mr. Lamkin said, "we are involved with the disadvantaged, the right to read, . . . illiteracy, black colleges, minorities, and other special groups and problems. . . . But I would say that these focuses will change from year to year. And what we have to do is to come up with some type of assessment that will allow us effectively to put forth a long-term program . . . to address the total environment, . . . that will be responsive to priorities as they do change."

Mr. Lamkin stressed the need for more and better data, and spoke of efforts to improve this situation. It was mentioned that the statistics gathering operation in OE is separate from the Bureau of Libraries and Educational Technology, and that there is some disadvantage in this separation.

The Chairman asked Mr. Lamkin if he had ideas about what the Commission should be concerning itself with and, from OE's point of view, what its priorities should be. Mr. Lamkin named four areas: manpower, the role of the library in combatting poverty, networking, and technology.

Mr. Lamkin mentioned, as he had at the Commission's first meeting, that the Commission's reporting cycle is awkward. Thus, he said, there is need for communication channels and reporting at other times--so that his Bureau will know in time about Commission recommendations that might influence its budget.

Mr. Lerner asked about a proposal made in New York State that library service for children should be divorced from the public library system and be available through the schools. Members of the OE staff said that such a plan would seem to be unacceptable for inner city schools, where library facilities are now so very inadequate. Mr. Lerner, too, thought the proposal unacceptable.

Mr. Lamkin was asked about the reorganization that was then going on in the Office of Education. He reported that an Office of Educational Renewal has been created, and that it will control the expenditure of most of the "discretionary" funds. It is planned to set up "renewal centers" and "renewal sites," intended to revitalize teaching. At least

200 (and up to 1,000) of these centers are planned. Each will receive federal stimulation money (\$500,000 to \$700,000 each) and then state and local funds are expected to take over. Each center will set up its own renewal strategy.

Mr. Lamkin suggested, and the members of the Commission agreed, that regular communication between the Bureau and the Commission should be arranged.

Mr. Fred Cole, President of the Council on Library Resources (CLR), accompanied by colleagues, talked about the Council's operations, projects, plans, and thoughts, and left copies of his prepared remarks with the Commission members.

CLR, which was established by the Ford Foundation in 1956, has as its sole aim to aid the solution of the problems of libraries, with special emphasis on academic and research libraries. Its policy is to support only those programs which will help provide solutions to the problems of libraries in general, rather than assisting in particular needs. Since 1956 it has committed almost \$17 million.

In concluding his remarks, Mr. Cole had mentioned the need for a formal national library service--a central institution or combination of institutions which would assume a leadership position for the orderly, economical, and efficient coordination of library resources and particularly services in this country. This led Mr. Kemeny to ask Mr. Cole about statements in CLR's 14th Annual Report. There it had been said, "In a different world, the United States might have a single library system. . . ." This was followed by statements that the money for such a system is not available, and that, anyway, a single system probably could not be built. Mr. Kemeny added that he thinks a single library system is the only salvation of libraries in the U.S. and that, though the cost of development would be enormous, savings would be great after development.

Mr. Cole replied that he thinks it is politically impossible to set up control over all libraries and that it is at present impracticable economically and technologically. He and his colleagues distinguished between the need for greater national service and centralized control, and there was general agreement that the choice is not between doing things as they always have been done and dictatorship. Everyone favors consortia, it was said, but members of the CLR staff are not convinced that they have yet resulted in substantial financial savings. Mr. Mohrhardt spoke too about his doubts that there is a saving in central purchasing, or that very large processing centers are effective, and he is concerned about

the control of selection of books--directly or indirectly. He urged an extensive, exhaustive study of these matters. The move toward centralized cataloging is rapid, it was agreed.

Mr. Kemeny spoke of the enormous duplication of rarely used materials which he sees as a waste of natural resources. Mr. Cole responded that on the face of it, setting up a national lending library or several national lending libraries would be the ideal solution, but there are still overwhelming obstacles, he said, including copyright problems, to this solution.

Mr. Burkhardt mentioned the recommendation of the National Advisory Commission on Libraries that a national research and development institute should be established and added that some of the members of the present Commission doubt that such a centralized institute is necessary any more. Mr. Cole said he would look with favor on the Advisory Commission's recommendation, if the institute could be properly organized and staffed. Mr. Clapp talked about the history of library technology--meaning the mechanical devices used in the operation of libraries--and accomplishments like the development of a permanent, durable catalog card, techniques for labeling books, experiments in book preservation, etc. He thinks the application of known technology to library work is one of the most important things ahead, but CLR cannot continue its subventions, and ALA's financial situation threatens its Library Technology Program. There are very good arguments for federal support of this area, he feels.

After the OE and CLR representatives left the meeting the Chairman reported that the Office of Management and Budget had given the Commission a budget "mark" of \$350,000. This had been appealed, by letter to OMB and by conversation with OMB staff. In the course of that conversation Mr. Burkhardt had been told that no specific line items had been cut, and that the Commission would be free to divide its total budget among categories as it wished. Mr. Burkhardt said he is convinced that OMB would have allowed a larger sum if the Commission had not been forced to state its request in general terms, without giving specifications of particular projects. OMB staff had suggested that the Commission could have OE conduct studies for it, but Mr. Burkhardt doubted that independent analyses could be obtained in this way. Also, the possibility of money from private sources was suggested. The question of funds from vested interests was raised: in response Mr. Burkhardt had proposed following the policy of the National Endowment for the Humanities, which decides first what projects it wants to undertake and then accepts money for those purposes.

The Commission discussed whether appointment of a Deputy Director should be delayed because it appears the funds available will be less than

had been expected. It was agreed that the appointment should be left to Mr. Stevens' discretion.

The Chairman had met with a representative of the General Accounting Office, who wished to learn about the Commission's plans and to discuss how it will relate to other federal agencies that deal with similar matters. Mr. Burkhardt learned that GAO must conduct studies that are requested by members of Congress--which suggested that a senator might have a matter of interest to the Commission explored for it by GAO.

Mr. Burkhardt said that, with the limited budget now expected, he would be inclined to defer regional meetings in favor of having studies made of problems with which the Commission is concerned, or, he suggested, the Commission might hold some of its meetings outside Washington and consult with some people from the area visited. It was agreed that the February and April meetings should be held in Washington; the possibility of holding the June meeting in Chicago, or elsewhere, was to be considered.

The staff was asked to try to set regular meeting dates for the Commission, beginning in the fall.

It was agreed that COSATI and NSF should be asked to make presentations at the February meeting and that two hours should be reserved for this purpose.

In this connection Mr. Cuadra mentioned that NSF is reinstituting a research program on libraries and information science, and he said that it probably would be receptive to suggestions and guidance from the Commission on particular directions and programs that might be useful. It was suggested that Mr. Stevens should discuss this matter with Mr. Melvin Day of NSF. As for the possibility of having OE do things for the Commission, it was felt that the framework of the OE program, as Mr. Lamkin had described it, made it unlikely that such assistance could be had at the present time.

The Chairman reported that Mr. Lamkin had said that, if the Commission thought something was missing from the OE budget that ought to be included, he hoped it would point that out at budget hearings. The need for caution in doing this was expressed, though members of the Commission generally thought it has a legitimate interest in OE programs and may wish to speak out concerning them. It was noted that Mr. Lamkin appears in need of help in maintaining traditional library support.

Mr. Becker noted with approval Mr. Lamkin's invitation to the Commission to effect a liaison with his operation, and he urged Mr. Stevens to spend some time during the coming months getting to know what assistance various organizations expect from the Commission and what help they are prepared to give it.

Colonel Aines suggested that key Washington people (like Edward David, the President's Science Advisor) be asked to meet with the Commission at some future time, and that some Congressional liaison should be established.

Mr. Kemeny said that the Commission members keep talking about implementing recommendations, but he wonders whether there is any consensus at all about priorities or what should be done. He would have expected the Commission to have many in-depth discussions to establish where it is going before it turns to implementation.

Mr. Cuadra suggested that the Commission should:

- 1) Define the level of service that ought to be provided to different groups of citizens and ask whether they should have equal service regardless of their geographical location.

Commenting on this point, Mr. Velde said he considers it one that the Commission really must consider, because if it decides that equal service is at all possible, that will shape the system to be advocated, and he thinks this is a question that has not been answered. Mrs. Moore said she doesn't think equal service will ever be possible, but the Chairman said he believes it is the civic ideal. Mr. Cuadra responded that he does not think it is an ideal to which there is commitment.

- 2) Ask what is the shape of system that might meet whatever needs we define, and what degree of centralization and cooperation there should be, and narrow down the possibilities.

- 3) Define the time frame within which the Commission should operate.

Mr. Becker noted that the two areas which both OE and CLR think should have the Commission's attention are networking and technology.

The Chairman urged the members to try to come together on a problem to be considered in depth at the next meeting--to see how it might be solved, or at least how some forward motion could be achieved. He does not think it necessary to decide that this is the most important problem.

Further discussion of how the Commission should get started with its work followed. Colonel Aines urged that the first order of business should be to learn what is going on, what the problems are, and to collect data; Mr. Becker suggested that a national plan for library and information services should be taken to be the principal topic of attention and that the Commission should make some assumptions about what the plan should be, which it will change as it learns; Mr. Kemeny's view was that a set of goals for a national library system should first be agreed upon, after

which the Commission could look at what exists and what is practical, and make concrete recommendations; and Mr. Goland, who was afraid that if the Commission tried to do too much, it would end up doing little on any one point, thought it appropriate to pick a problem, get the background, and work at it. Mr. Dunlap thought that, at the start, it might be well for the Commission to assess how well libraries meet published accepted standards. The Chairman urged that the Commission avoid the trap of becoming an indefinite talk, discussion, and study group, recognize that its members--though modest--do know some things, and take up some matters which it can be confident will eventually be part of a greater, larger scheme.

It was agreed that at the next meeting there should be a discussion in depth of a national network--and it was hoped that the report of the Airlie House Conference on networking (of which Mr. Becker spoke) would be available in advance. This topic was thought suitable, since "a national plan" would inevitably include the concept of network, based upon assumptions of need. Mr. Becker was asked to develop an outline and detailed agenda for the meeting, with the help of such other members of the Commission as he wished to co-opt.

Colonel Aines said that he would be pleased to help the Executive Director lay out what might be called "Problems and Issues--A Paper on the Immediate, Middle, and Long Range." This, he said, might be a take-off point for the national plan.

The December 9 meeting was followed by a press conference, at which Mr. Stevens was introduced, and he and the Chairman spoke and answered questions.

Representatives of the American Society for Information Science (ASIS), for which the Society's President, Robert J. Kyle, acted as spokesman, met with the Commission at its morning session on December 10. They had distributed various materials describing the Society and its programs and at the meeting they distributed lists suggesting primary areas where the Commission can have impact and action opportunities.

Mr. Kyle explained that ASIS is an organization of some 4,000 members which they see as a link between library science and computer science. Mr. Cuadra asked whether ASIS represents the community concerned with non-print media of various sorts--data bases, magnetic tape, service suppliers, etc., or whether there are other groups with which the Commission should also be in touch. Other organizations were mentioned--The Information Industry Association, ASIDIC, and NAVA for audio-visual--but it was said that ASIS has the function of bridging the technologies to an information context.

Mr. Kyle talked about developments that can be expected within different time spans and noted that there are continuing shifts toward non-print data systems. Conventional libraries will remain with us for all of the foreseeable future, he said, but more and more data banks and parts of library collections will become available in non-print form for the many advantages that this sort of recording holds.

Reference was made to the existence of very large memory systems with rapid access time. If we could afford them for general use, Mr. Kyle said, their potential application would be revolutionary--limited primarily by the way in which materials could be indexed for retrieval. That, he added, becomes a horrendous task. He added too that part of the reason for the high cost of these systems is that it is difficult to keep them sufficiently occupied. It was mentioned that laser memories can be expected to provide much greater capacity and speed.

There was discussion of what is meant by the term "vocabulary control," and Mr. Kyle said he was referring to descriptions of the data that is being recorded. In response to comments by Mr. Stevens and Mr. Kemeny, Mr. Kyle agreed that the Commission's interest should not be restricted to fixed vocabulary but that it should look also toward free form natural language inquiry.

A presentation by the Special Libraries Association followed. Mr. Efren W. Gonzalez, President of SLA spoke, and he was accompanied by associates who, with him, answered questions asked by members of the Commission.

Mr. Gonzalez said that, generally speaking, special libraries are all libraries that are not public, academic, or school libraries. He listed their main concerns as

- (1) Library schools.
- (2) Continuing education.
- (3) Research.
- (4) Information networks.
- (5) Manpower.

It appeared to members of the Commission that the special libraries--excluding private research libraries, are not so severely handicapped by financial stringency as are other types of libraries. Mr. Gonzalez said, however, that the special libraries depend on public and academic libraries, and that the plight of the latter is thus also the special libraries' concern.

After the departure of the ASIS and SLA representatives the Commission by acclamation designated Catherine Scott to serve as its Vice Chairman until July 1, 1972.

It was agreed that the Commission should tour the Library of Congress in the course of the February meeting. The staff was asked to arrange for this.

Mr. Goland asked the Commission to consider the very serious financial situation of the New York Public Library--particularly its Research Libraries, about which he hoped it could take some action. Mr. Burkhardt, who had until recently been a member of the Board of Trustees of the New York Public, echoed this concern, but said he was not sure the Commission should single out NYPL, when so many other institutions also are in terrible difficulty. He did think that, at least, an effort should be made to amend legislation so that the independent research libraries will be eligible for federal funding, as academic libraries are. He mentioned that Mr. Marcus McCorison, Director and Librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, is collaborating with other private research librarians to prepare a statement regarding their situation, which he hoped could be presented to the Commission before its February meeting. Mr. Dunlap gave details about the problems of various independent research libraries and comments were added about the desperate circumstances of several public library systems. Mr. Lorenz said that the Association of Research Libraries will try to make a case for federal support for designated centers, including the New York Public Library, and he thinks this is the most likely long-range solution.

Mr. Lorenz, who had at the November meeting of the Commission agreed to prepare a paper on the Library of Congress as the National Library of the U.S., had asked that the presentation of this report be postponed until the February meeting. He suggested that the members of the Commission review Chapter 10 of Libraries at Large in preparation for this presentation. The Chairman asked Mr. Lorenz to prepare his paper so that it could be the basis of a policy decision by the Commission on the question addressed.

A paper Mr. Dunlap had prepared on the British Library had been sent to the members before the meeting, and Mr. Dunlap commented on it. He said he thought the British national lending library arrangements and their periodicals bank might serve as useful models in the U.S.

Mr. Lerner mentioned that he will visit Mr. H. T. Hookway of the British Library in the near future, and he said he will report on this visit at the next meeting of the Commission.

The Chairman asked whether there would be any particular value in having a National Library in the United States operate under a board of directors, and he mentioned that the U.S. situation is complicated by the existence of the three national libraries in two branches of government. Mr. Lorenz said he thinks of the Commission as the advisory group that is needed, and he advocated a sub-committee of the Commission to concern itself with the three national libraries.

Mr. Dunlap went on to emphasize the need in this country for both a national lending library and a periodicals bank, and there was some discussion of the services in the former area that are now performed by the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago. Mr. Dunlap said that if the U.S. were going to have a national lending library, one would almost expect that it would be concentrated at the Center. Mr. Lorenz mentioned that the Library of Congress has authority in the National Program of Acquisitions and Cataloging to acquire at least one additional copy of significant materials that are published around the world, and to put the additional copy or copies elsewhere in the U.S. That provision has never been funded, but, if money were appropriated, all new materials could be acquired under this Program and deposited in a lending library.

The Association of Research Libraries was said to be concerning itself with the possible establishment of a periodicals bank, and Mr. Lorenz was asked to learn and report on what ARL is doing in this area.

Mr. Lerner thought that arrangements for lending in this country would have to be regional, rather than national (or perhaps regional--backed up by a national lending library, Mr. Kemeny suggested). It was agreed that the storage of little used material (probably on a regional basis) is a matter associated with the lending library concept.

Mr. Dunlap was asked, for the next meeting, to prepare a report on national vs. regional storage and lending.

Mr. Cuadra came back to the question of time frame and asked whether what is being discussed is only the moving of physical material, or also other forms of information transfer which can be expected to account for an increasing share of distribution in future years. He asked also for definition of the domain of services for which a system is to be invented. Mr. Kemeny said that even if only information is being moved, there are problems of communication, and he thinks it will be difficult to calculate whether it would be more sensible to have ten regional centers or one national one. He went on to say that he thinks the only way to approach these matters is to take a guess as to what the distribution of information will be some decades ahead. He assumes that any system would have to move some hard copy, and that it will also have to handle photocopy, and material in machine-readable form.

Mr. Kemeny listed the concepts being discussed:

- 1) Networks.
- 2) Regional vs. national storage and lending.
- 3) Media and form in which information will exist in the future.
- 4) What types of users and what kind of services.

Mr. Goland commented that, though it is necessary for the Commission to look at a very broad spectrum, he thinks it may do so best by giving attention to specific parts or elements. After something concrete has been done on a number of them, a bigger picture will gradually emerge.

Referring to the assignment Mr. Becker had accepted for the next meeting, the Chairman asked him how he expects to define "information network." Mr. Becker replied that he is thinking of the systematic organization of information resources--the conceptual framework by which these resources are interconnected, regardless of their location and regardless of the form and nature of the information.

Mr. Quadra asked Mr. Stevens to assemble information about plans that states have developed for statewide networks. It was mentioned that California, Washington, Wisconsin, Illinois, and New York have such plans.

Colonel Aines, Mr. Becker, and Mr. Dunlap, as requested, had prepared lists of key reports of concern to the Commission, and Colonel Aines had appended a "Listing of Data Efforts, According to Field, of Science or Technology." These lists were distributed to the members of the Commission. Reference was made to discussion at the previous meeting of the desirability of having summaries of these reports prepared. It was understood that Mr. Stevens would undertake to have appropriate summaries prepared--perhaps by someone serving as a consultant.

At the start of the afternoon session on December 10 Miss Scott gave a report on "Library Statistics in the Seventies," prepared after consultation with Dr. Frank Schick of the Office of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics. She mentioned as important recent developments work on a national library statistics data system, called LIBGIS, which is to be based primarily on cooperation between state library agencies, and the Herner Study, the purpose of which is to design a research project to identify the existing Federal, State, and local agencies, organizations and national associations which collect and disseminate library data.

Mr. Lorenz mentioned an international standard for library statistical terminology which was adopted at a UNESCO conference. UNESCO collects international library statistics every three years and it is expected that the standardization of terms will--as gradually put into effect--make the UNESCO compilations more meaningful.

The Chairman suggested that the Commission must ask what kind of statistical data it needs to get on with its task, and Mr. Lorenz testified to the crucial role of adequate statistics in the enactment of legislation. Sentiment was expressed for waiting until what is needed is rather precisely known before additional detailed data is collected, but there was general agreement that Mr. Stevens should keep in mind the question of what base line statistics the Commission will require.

Mr. Becker reported that he had located a man--Mr. Theodore Shuchat, who is willing to prepare the fundamental facts about various types of libraries for which the Commission had asked at its last meeting. The cost is expected to be between \$500 and \$800, and a chart should be completed before the February meeting. Mr. Becker was asked to proceed with arrangements to have this work done.

Colonel Aines and Mr. Lorenz had prepared lists of possible consultants, and other members of the Commission were asked to add to these lists.

There was inconclusive discussion of the desirability of obtaining support for Commission studies from other federal agencies and/or private foundations, and about arrangements that might be made to have other agencies (e.g., the Office of Education) contract for investigative or policy studies for which the Commission would prepare specifications.

The Chairman noted that the following will be included on the agenda for the next meeting:

- A tour (about 2 hours in length) of the Library of Congress.
- Presentations by COSATI and NSF.
- Discussion of a national network--for which Mr. Becker will prepare an outline.
- Paper to be prepared by Mr. Dunlap on regional vs. national storage and lending.
- Paper to be prepared by Mr. Lorenz on the Library of Congress as the national library (in preparation for which members of the Commission were asked to review Chapter 10 of Libraries at Large).